Narratives of illness and medical practice have been the subject of much detailed analysis and commentary by scholars in the relatively new field of ‘Medical Humanities’. Literary works have provided many nuanced accounts of the ways in which ill-health and medicine affect the lives of individuals, their families and communities. However, for much of the twentieth century, the cinema has provided mass audiences with an equally powerful and more readily accessible source of images and ideas about many aspects of health care and medicine, including the doctor-patient relationship, the promise and perils of medical research, changes in medical and nursing education and practice and patients’ experience of serious illness. Notwithstanding this, thus far medical movies have attracted much less scholarly attention.

This module seeks to understand the complex relations between medicine and cinema by critically examining a selection from the large body of fiction films in which health professionals and health care play important roles. Why has medicine proved such an enduring source of fascination and inspiration for screenwriters, producers, directors and moviegoers alike? How have doctors and other health professionals been portrayed in fiction films, and what does this tell us about changing societal expectations of – and misgivings about – medicine? What kinds of narratives recur, and what wider social and moral agendas, aspirations and values have been conveyed or critiqued through the cinematic representation of doctors and medicine?

The majority of the films discussed in this module are English-language productions, from vintage classics of Hollywood’s ‘Golden Age’ to well-known contemporary movies, but others are drawn from a wide range of world cinema cultures, and feature the work of famous directors such as John Ford and Martin Scorsese as well as mainstream Hollywood studio productions and the work of auteurs such as Alfred Hitchcock and Akira Kurosawa.
No previous knowledge of film theory or film history is required, but specialist teaching and targeted learning resources will be provided to enable students to acquire and demonstrate a good basic understanding of the technical language or ‘grammar’ of film-making (shot selection, editing, mise-en-scène, etc.), and to combine this with relevant aspects of film theory and close textual and contextual analysis of selected films, as well as the comparative study of narrative in medicine, literature and film.

While the emphasis will be on representations and narratives of ‘medicine in general’, rather than on the systematic presentation of different aspects or elements of medicine, the module will feature a great many such aspects, including medical education and apprenticeship; doctor-patient relationships; professional ambitions and rivalries, in particular the role of nurses in health care; medicine in war; medical experimentation and medical research; medicine in non-Western contexts; medical-ethical conflicts and dilemmas; doctors as patients; and the peculiar psychological and professional challenges and conflicts associated with the practice of psychiatry and psychotherapy. The module will also examine some of the ways in which the performative aspects of medical education, medical practice and professional development are represented in film. Of necessity, the module will only be able to touch on some of these many themes, and students will be encouraged to follow up on their own interests in their course essay.

***** INDICATIVE SESSIONS *****

**Week 1 - Introduction to Medical Movies (1): Thematic, Historical and Disciplinary Perspectives**

In addition housekeeping, timetabling and other practical information, the first two sessions provide students with a broad overview of the course’s content and structure, together with some basic conceptual and practical tools and relevant theoretical and disciplinary perspectives for use throughout the module.

1. Exploring course participants’ existing knowledge of film, their expectations of the course and their particular research interests. [BG]

2. An introduction to some of the principal underlying themes of the module, e.g.
   - The importance of medicine as a cinematic metaphor for the wider social and moral health or sickness of society;
   - Cinematic representations of medical practice and medical research as proxies for society’s overall attitude towards science and technology and their relation to human values;
   - The historic role of inspirational narratives of medical progress in providing lay audiences with social and cultural reassurance in times of depression, austerity and insecurity. [MJC]

2. A brief historical overview of changing representations of medical care and the medical profession in English-language cinema from c. 1930 to the present. [BG]

3. **Screening:** Trust Me - I’m A Doctor (UK, 2008)

4. An introduction to the study of medical movies in the broader context of the Medical Humanities, especially their shared interests in narrative and visuality. [MJC]

**Bibliography:**
- Brian Glasser, *Medicina: Doctors in Films* (2010), Ch. 5, ‘Visuality: Mapping the Overlap’
- Richard Howells & Joaquim Negreiros, *Visual Culture* (2011), Ch. 9, ‘Film’

**Week 2 – Introduction to Medical Movies (2): Film Analysis, Film Narrative and Film Theory - Some Essential Tools for the Course**

This session will provide some essential analytical tools and theoretical frameworks for understanding how doctors and medicine are portrayed in the movies and what their presence signifies:
1. A short introduction to film analysis [BG]:
   - The language of film – shots, cuts, editing, montage, mise-en-scène, etc. [clips to illustrate]
   - Practical exercise: filmic textual analysis **NB course participants to bring in laptops**
   - Narration and narrative - how scenes and film narratives are constructed; the effects on audiences of different styles of film-making [clips to illustrate]

2. An introduction to the notion of film genre in relation to medical movies [MJC]:
   - What is ‘genre’, and to what extent can medical movies be regarded as a genre?
   - Film images, subjective representations and the construction of genres and stereotypes
   - Medical drama and melodrama
   - Some differences between medical fiction films and TV medical and hospital ‘continuing dramas’

3. An introduction to recurrent narratives in medical movies [MJC]:
   - Death and Resurrection/Medical nemesis and rebirth
   - ‘Wounded Healer’ narratives
   - Illness narratives
   - Conflicts between the demands of medical science and healing sick individuals

4. Screening: **Dear Diary** (Italy, 1995) - (extract)

Bibliography:
- Robert Edgar Hunt, John Marland & Steven Rawle, *The Language of Film* (2010), Chs. 2, 5, 6
- Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (1999)
- Warren Buckland, *Teach Yourself Film Studies* (2008 edn.), Chs. 1, 2, 4
- James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media and Beyond* (2009 revd. edn.)

**Week 3 - Exemplary Narratives? The Image of Doctors, Medicine and Medical Research in the 1930s ‘Golden Age’ of Hollywood [BG]**

**Purpose of the Session:** Critically to examine the portrayal of medicine and medical research in major Hollywood movies of the 1930s, with particular reference to the medical ‘biopics’ of the late ‘30s. To what extent can these be regarded as ‘exemplary narratives’, and were alternative views of contemporary medical practice also available in English-language cinema at the time?

**Screening:** **A Man To Remember** (U.S., 1938)

**Supplementary viewing:** **Arrowsmith** (U.S., 1931), **Dr Ehrlich’s Magic Bullet** (US, 1940), **Dr Monica / Mary Stevens M.D.** (U.S., 1933/4), **The Great Moment** (U.S., 1944), **The Life of Louis Pasteur** (U.S., 1936), **Men in White** (U.S., 1934).

- Bruce Babington, ‘To catch a star on your fingertips: diagnosing the medical biopic from *The Story of Louis Pasteur* to *Freud*’, in Graeme Harper & Andrew Moor, eds., *Signs of Life: Medicine and Cinema* (2005), 120-131

**Week 4 – Learning to Talk the Talk (and Walk the Walk): Medical Education and Apprenticeship on Film [MJC]**

**Purpose of the Session:** 1.) To consider the role-modelling processes embedded in medical apprenticeship and to examine some of the ways in which medical education has been portrayed in film;
   2.) To compare film narratives of medical education and apprenticeship with the *bildungsroman* genre (novels of character formation and development) in literature
Screening: *Doctor in the House* (U.K., 1954)


- Peter E. Dans, Doctors in the Movies (2000), 8-15
- Richard Gordon, Doctor in the House (1952; first p/b edn. 1961)

**Week 5 – Face/off: tampering with identity [BG]**

Purpose of Session: To examine some of the ways in which cinema has represented the face in relation to the construction of identity; and surgical adjustment thereof.

Screening: *Les Yeux sans Visage* (France, 1960)
Clips from La Chambre des Officiers (France, 2003), *Les Yeux sans Visage* (France, 1960), *A Woman’s Face* (U.S., 1941)

Supplementary viewing: *The Face of Another* (Japan, 1966), *The Skin I Live In* (Spain, 2011)


**Week 6 – Reading Week**

Screening (optional): Medical movies by auteurs: *A Matter of Life and Death* (U.K., 1946)

**Week 7 - Discussion of Student Essay Proposals**

Screening (optional): Medical movies by auteurs: *Red Beard* (Japan, 1965)

**Week 8 – “The reel truth (and nothing but): non-fictional films, documentaries and health” [BG]**

Guest speaker: Mark Kidel (director of ‘A Hospital Remembers’)

Purpose of Session: To provide a brief introduction to non-fictional and documentary genres in cinema. To consider the non-fictional and documentary cinematic representation of medicine and health. What differences - and similarities - are there between these genres and fiction films in relation to health-related subjects? In particular, are documentaries more ‘real’? If not, what kinds of mediation do they deploy?

Screening: *A Hospital Remembers* (France, 1999)
Clips from Sicko (U.S., 2003), Titicut Follies (U.S., 1967)


Bibliography Tim Boon, Films of fact’ (2009, Wallflower Press),
- Brian Glasser, ‘Real lives I: A series of awakenings’, in Glasser, Medicinema (2010), 82-91
- Oliver Sacks, Awakenings (1991 Penguin p/b edn.)
Week 9 – Medicine and Unreason: Representations of Mental Illness, Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis in Fiction Films [MJC]

(Guest speaker: Dr. Peter Byrne, U.C.L. Medical School)

Purpose of Session: To examine changes in the ways in which mental illness, psychiatry and psychoanalysis have been portrayed in mainstream cinema since 1945 and to discuss some of the more sensitive issues raised by the portrayal of mental illness and psychiatric practice in contemporary cinema. To what extent have fiction films contributed to popular misconceptions about mental illness and to the continued stigmatization of people living with mental illness?

Screening: The Snake Pit (U.S., 1948)

Supplementary Viewing: The Beaver (US, 2011), Dressed to Kill (U.S., 1980), Girl, Interrupted (U.S., 1999), La Tete contre les Murs (France, 1959), Shutter Island (U.S., 2010), Spellbound (U.S., 1946), Ward No.6 (Russia, 2009)


Week 10 – East Meets West: Modern Medicine in New Asian Cinema [MJC]

Purpose of Session: To highlight some of the distinctive characteristics of the representation of modern ‘Western’ medicine in recent Asian cinema, especially the cinematic use of medicine to expose the underlying tensions and contradictions of societies undergoing rapid socio-economic modernization.

Screening: Push! Push! (S. Korea, 1996)

Supplementary viewing: Dear Doctor (Japan, 2009), Munna Bhai M.B.B.S. (India, 2003), Syndromes and a Century (Thailand, 2006)

Week 11 (28 Mar) – The Last Lesson: Death [BG]

Purpose of Session: To reflect upon the representations of death and dying in the cinema, with reference to limitations of medicine and the difficult choices confronting physicians in circumstances where the results of medical intervention are, at best, ambiguous and where persistence with ‘curative’ treatment may be at the expense of the patient’s dignity, well-being and quality of life.

Screenings: Dark Victory (U.S., 1940)
Clips from ‘The Firemen’s Ball’ (Czechoslovakia, 1967), The Flower of my Secret (Spain, 1995)

Supplementary viewing: The Death of Mr Lazarescu (Rumania, 2006), Departures (Japan, 2008), The English Surgeon (U.K., 2008), The Son’s Room (Italy, 2001), Wit (U.K., 2001)

- Peter E. Dans, Doctors in the Movies (2000), 276-280
- Bernard F Dick Dark Victory (1981, University of Wisconsin Press)
Select bibliography

Further Secondary Reading

- David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985)
- Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, 'Rituals, conventions, archetypes and formulas: movie genres' in *The Film Experience* (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St Martin’s, 2004) 288-324
- Mary Anne Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s* (Theories of Representation and Difference) (London: Macmillan, 1988), section on films with medical themes
- Andrew Klevan *Film Performance: from Achievement to Appreciation* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005)
- Catherine F Schryer & Philippa Spoel, 'Genre theory, health-care discourse, and professional identity formation', *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 19 (2005), 249-278
- Aylish Wood, *Technoscience in Contemporary Film* (Manchester: Manchester University)